

Brilliant Pritchard is Wanderers' winner

Wycombe Wanderers 2, Rest of the Isthmian League XI 1

WYCOMBE WANDERERS' brilliant England International Larry Pritchard turned Tuesday night's prestige encounter against the Rest of the League, with two great goals and put the Blues in a confident frame of mind for their all important F.A. Cup battle with Walton tomorrow (Saturday).

But despite scoring the goals, Pritchard's all-round performance did much to raise the standard of the annual game against the champions which looked to be heading towards a Wycombe defeat after a poor first half.

Blues' boss Brian Lee gave all but two of his squad a run out and particularly impressive were Dave Bullock, John Maskell and Tony Amos. The former Slough striker had his best game to date and did much to strengthen his claims for a place in the Cup side.

Rob Williams seemed happier in the back four in place of the absent Olson while Alan Gane worked hard in midfield. Paul

Birdseye went through an unhappy first 45 minutes, although he laid on the equalising goal just before half time.

As expected several changes had to be made from Isthmian's squad named before the game. Internationals Alan Phillips, John Butterfield and Mick Cooper all had to pull out but even so, there were still three "caps" on duty.

FREE GIFT

In the first half, Wycombe did little to earn their tag of champions. They handed the Rest a gift goal and looked decidedly shaky in the opening half hour.

After only five minutes a mix up between Birdseye and Williams saw the full back hastily lob the ball back high to his goalkeeper. O'Brien, jumping to collect the pass, couldn't hold it and Johnny Baker gratefully accepted the simple chance of scoring.

Quick breaks by nippy Leatherhead centre forward Dave Skinner caused Wycombe some anxiety and their first real reply came after 13 minutes when Amos only fractionally missed the ball with a diving header from Searle's flick-on.

Wanderers were becoming repeatedly frustrated by the sound defensive work of former Loakes Park man Bobby Hatt and Co. who, at any hint of danger, immediately sent the ball back to Dave Collyer. The Woking 'keeper used his goal kicking to good effect in the first half and the length of his kicks compared favourably with those from O'Brien.

After 35 minutes Pritchard brought a great save from Collyer with a shot on the turn following Wycombe's first corner of the match. Pritchard's work rate began to lift his teammates towards the end of the half and after Amos had a strong left foot drive blocked by the 'keeper, Wanderers hit back with a beautiful goal.

John Delaney ventured up-field for one of the few times. His move proved invaluable as he nodded on Birdseye's measured cross to Pritchard who clipped the ball home on the volley past the helpless Collyer.

Both sides made substitutions at the interval and for once it was Wanderers who took control of the early second-half exchanges. Neat passing set up some fast attacks and it took only six minutes of the half to break through again with another memorable goal.

LONG THROW

It all started with Dave Bullock's long throw in which Searle flicked on—again out-jumping the ginger haired Preston. Horseman stepped over the ball and gave Pritchard the chance to thunder home an exciting goal.

Once ahead, Wycombe found new enthusiasm and produced far superior football to the first half. The visitors' defence began to creak and only a couple of inches thwarted Horseman's header after an accurate cross from Amos.

Although the Rest presented little threat in attack throughout the second period; John Maskell, coming on for O'Brien at half time, produced a reflex save from Clive Foskett at the second attempt, after the Walton man looked certain to score with a crashing drive.

John Delaney was unlucky not to increase the lead in the final minutes when his header was cleared by Peter Deadman at the far post.

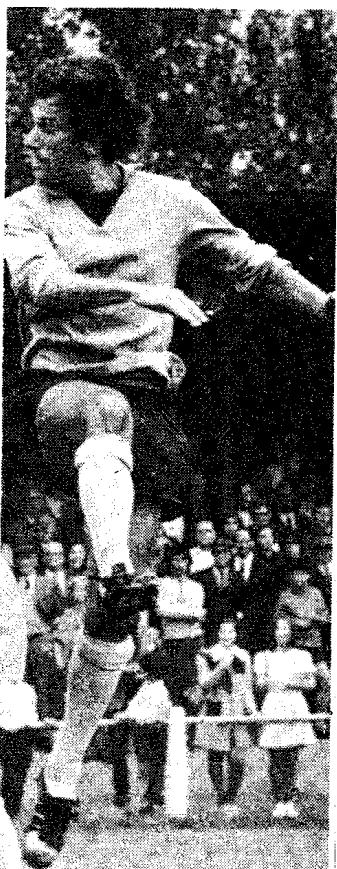
It was just revenge for the Blues, who went down 3-2 last year in the corresponding game. On that occasion 2,000 people turned out to watch the match — on Tuesday there was only 936.

WYCOMBE WANDERERS: K. O'Brien (sub. J. Maskell 45 mins), P. Birdseye (sub D. Bullock 45 mins), D. Gamblin, R. Williams, J. Delaney, A. Gane, A. Amos, L. Pritchard, K. Searle, A. Horseman (sub M. Hollifield 62 mins), J. Hutchinson.

REST OF THE LEAGUE: D. Collyer (Woking), L. Tilley (Leytonstone), D. Reid (Leatherhead, sub G. Thomas (Hayes) 76 mins), R. Hatt (Hayes), M. Preston (Kingstonian), P. Deadman (Hendon), A. Brothers (St. Albans), P. Leakey (Bishop's Stortford, sub T. Roberts (Hayes) 45 mins), D. Skinner (Leatherhead), J. Baker (Hendon, sub C. Foskett (Walton and Hersham) 45 mins).

Referee: L. H. Sinking (Herts F.A.)
Half-time: 1-1

Goalscorers: Wycombe — Pritchard 2 (45, 51); The Rest — Baker (5).



LARRY PRITCHARD

... two goal hero